

Minister Bóka, Vice President Gonzáles Pons, Dear Esteban, Colleagues and friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the Hungarian Presidency for organizing this conference and providing us with this platform to reflect our Union's journey as well as its future.

This year marks a significant milestone - the 15th anniversary of the Treaty of Lisbon - an agreement that fundamentally shaped the EU as we know it today. Lisbon consolidated the EU into a single legal entity, granting it legal personality. It introduced qualified majority voting in the Council, enhancing our capacity for collective decision-making. And it established the office of the High Representative, bolstering our voice in foreign affairs. Lisbon expanded the European Parliament's legislative powers across more than 40 policy areas, elevating it to a co-legislator. One tangible outcome: the elected representatives of the European Parliament to decide who will become the next Commission President.

Today our Union faces challenges that we can overcome only with joint actions. We need to create a Union that is more capable to act and to deliver on the expectations that our citizens rightly hold. On the key questions of our time:

- how to overcome the migration crisis?
- how to secure Europe against threats from imperialist neighbours and enable our own defence?
- how to restore European competitiveness and energy independence?
- how to become a centre of technological innovation again?

– no single Member State holds the power or the capacity alone.

Yet in this crucial moment, we are struggling with bureaucracy and perceived overregulation; with slow processes and lowest common denominators.

Many of these issues are structural in nature, and some are connected to the Treaties itself. In some cases, we would simply need to use the possibilities that the Lisbon Treaty already grants us. The *de facto* right of initiative for the European Parliament, under Article 225 TFEU, is functioning. Last term the von der Leyen commission has followed up 24 out of the 25 proposals of the EP. However, these were solely new proposals for regulation. We need to start using Article 225 to amend and revoke existing legislation.

We can envision greater involvement of national parliaments in the legislative process on European level. I think it's easy to see that the current procedures on yellow and orange cards have room for improvement.

During the last term, we in the constitutional affairs committee made extensive efforts to use to propose Treaty reforms that would at least address some of these issues. We proposed creating a more agile Union, with expanded use of QMV and a stronger say for national parliaments through green cards and stronger subsidiarity enforcement. Unfortunately, Council has so far refused to even consider these proposals for a debate. I hear those critics who say the 250 or so proposals for Treaty change were too far-reaching. Regardless whether one agrees with every single proposal, I very much believe that we need the debate on the future of the Union.

I think is self-evident that there are some policy fields, like defence, border protection, energy or innovation where we need to move forward additional steps. For some it appears as if European policy is about who can push through most of their presumed national interests in Brussels. That it is a zero-sum game of nations. I think that this is a misguided assumption. The common European interest is far more than the intersection of 27 national interests.

In fact, on a global stage, no single European country can stand alone in a world dominated by superpowers. We must, therefore, ask ourselves:

Are we prepared to let decisions about our future be made elsewhere - in Washington, Beijing, or New Delhi? If not then we need to overcome an integration method of micro-managed intergovernmentalism, combined with executive federalism. Yet at the same time it is also true that we – and by that, I mean European institutions and national institutions alike – need to do more to listen to each other.

I think trusting the institutions that are mandated by the people – parliaments – to guide future steps on integration would be a potential solution. The majority in the European Parliament is convinced that we must strengthen the Union and reform our institutions. It is up to us to take the next steps in the history of this greatest endeavour of all, to make this Union more robust and more capable of delivering for its citizens.

We have the opportunity to think boldly. Only then can we build a Union that strongly protects our interests and upholds our values. We are here to shape its future. Think about it.

Thank you very much.